Brownfields Community of Practice
Chester, PA
8/7/14
Meeting Summary

Attendees:

- Sarah Low, USFS, sclow@fs.fed.us
- Chad Freed, Widener University, chfreed@widener.edu
- Jamie Anderson, Widener University, jnanderson@widener.edu
- Karen Holm, Delco Planning Dept, holmk@delaware.pa.us
- Mickey Young, EPA, young.mickey@epa.gov
- Kristeen Gaffney, EPA-3, Gaffney.kristeen@epa.gov
- Stephanie Branche, EPA-3, branche.stephanie@epa.gov
- Simeon Hahn, NOAA, simeon.hahn@noaa.gov
- Bobbi Britton, Brandywine, bobbibrotton99@gmail.com
- Riche S. Outlaw, NJ-DEP, riche.outlaw@dep.nj.gov
- Frank McLaughlin, NJ-DEP, frank.mclaughlin@dep.nj.gov
- Michael Leff, Davey/USFS, michael.leff@davey.com
- Sabina Pendse, EPA-2, pendse.sabina@epa.gov
- John Filippelli, EPA-2, filippelli.john@epa.gov
- Elizabeth Limbrick, NJIT TAB, limbrick@njit.edu
- Peter Kroll, CCMUA, pkroll@ccmua.org
- Allyson Salisbury, Rutgers University, allyson.salisbury@gmail.com
- Ed Morgereth, Biohabitats, emorgereth@biohabitats.com
- Devon Harman, PWD, devon.harman@phila.gov
- Sarah Tse, USFS, sarah.s.tse@gmail.com
- Luciana Cunha, TNC, lcunha@tnc.org
- Julie Ulrich, TNC, julrich@tnc.org
- Bob Grossmann, PHS, rgrossmann@pennhort.org
- Ellen Creveling, TNC, ecreveling@tnc.org
- A. Jean Arnold, City of Chester, ajean.arnold@gmail.com
- Ann Faulds, PA Sea Grant, afaulds@psu.edu
- Latifah Griffin, City of Chester, lgriffin@chestercity.com
- Bill Payne, City of Chester, wpayne@chestercity.com
- Paul Kritz, Oak Valley Land Planning & Design, wpfritz@oakvalleydeisgn.com

Introduction

- Latifah Griffin, Assistant City Planner, Chester, PA
  - Chester is transforming its waterfront one brownfield site at a time
  - Impossible to completely inventory all sites, so CoP must prioritize sites with the most potential to be transformed into a functional land-use
  - Chester's History
    - Oldest city in PA, with a legacy of industry and economy that has resulted in the many brownfields sites
    - Population peaked in 1950, followed by a post-war decline and rising poverty and crime rates

    - Today's reduced population: 33k residents
- Current status of brownfields planning: NJTAB program at NJIT is providing assistance, have reached out to pursue funding for inventory. There are no active projects, but planning for climate change resilience

Summary of UWFP Camden Community of Practice Meeting (5/16/14)

- Frank McLaughlin, NJDEP
  - Camden has similar problems with industrial legacy and limited waterfront access
  - Phoenix Park is the fruit of years of collaboration and partnerships, largely coordinated by Andy Kricun, CCMUA:
    - Camden County purchased contaminated site (radiation, challenging brownfield site)
    - Various groups involved in economic development, living/resilient shorelines, stormwater management, etc, shared interest in the site and gathered tools and resources
    - From the beginning, planning has revolved around local interests and priorities

UWFP: Focus on Funding Opportunities

- Sarah Low, USDA Forest Service
  - Idea for communities of practice came out of UWFP
    - Goal: bring together people with shared concerns, build networks and connections to increase capacity
  - Regional focus offers opportunities
    - Sharing and mentorship between the partner cities
    - Federal agencies can engage with community organizations and communicate message to other groups who can help

- Kristeen Gaffney, EPA Region 3
  - Region 3 has many grants, long relationships with cities
  - EPA's brownfields program offers a variety of grants, can tailor to specific projects
    - The grants are nationally competitive, ex: area wide planning grants are designed for visioning, planning, market analysis, award $200,000 annually, 20 in total around country
    - October: next round of applications for assessment and cleanup grants
  - Coming this fall: job training grants for community workforce development – stormwater management, asbestos removal, energy audits, etc.
    Benefits local, disadvantaged workforces by training them in environmental tasks
  - Examples:
    - Philly has area-wide planning grant:
      - Philly Coke worksite on Del River
      - Job-training grant with energy coordinating agency
      - Stormwater management
      - Schuylkill cleanups
    - DNREC has South Wilmington wetlands area grant for assessment

        - The city will buy parcels and remediate into wetlands (stormwater and flood control)
    - Revolving loan fund for cleanup in Delaware
    - Chester's climate change resiliency plans (flooding, heat mitigation) have contract assistance, not a grant going directly to Chester (will be finalized in fall, presented to workgroup)
        - Chester Climate Taskforce published report, available on websites of City Planning Dept and Eastern PA Sea Grant
  - Offers free investigation of properties for contamination
  - How to win a grant?
    - Vital to reach out to funders well in advance
    - Proposals must emphasize partnerships and community engagement, and present a solid vision
    - Pay attention to timing and deadlines
  - Check EPA website for brownfields federal funding resource guide
  - Join the mailing list for updates

- Michael Leff, USDA Forest Service/Davey Institute, UWFP Ambassador
  - UWFP website identifies and describes different communities of practice, lists summaries of federal resources
  - Next step: crowd-source and gather resources from partners
  - The distinctions between different CoPs are artificial and solutions can overlap
  - Brownfields can be nexus for all CoPs, can integrate additional themes

SER Presentation: Restoring an Urban Ecosystem: The UWFP Philadelphia and Delaware River

- Simeon Hahn, NOAA
  - Brownfields development requires broader/regional perspective:
    - Connection to ocean, headwaters, important area to focus on for ecosystem
    - Need to think outside the box, beyond individual programs
    - Brownfields affect entire watershed, have regional effect beyond proximity to site
    - Potential to connect with ecosystem services and other CoPs in urban water areas
        - Decrease erosion and bioavailability of contaminants
        - Increase productivity and meet species requirements
        - Increase fishing and wildlife viewing/value increases
        - Buffers for flooding/surges and carbon sequestration
        - Sandy resilience crucial, overlap brownfields with climate resilience in densely urban areas
  - Tools:
    - NOAA Coastal Flood Exposure Mapper developed for Sandy (NY, NJ), composite of flood hazards, FEMA zones, etc, includes sea level rise scenarios
    - Environmental sensitivity index maps for remnant wetlands, different types of shorelines
    - Value added restoration matrix, ecosystem service vs. shoreline type

    - Map can ID brownfield properties (data needs checking)
  - Brownfields has broad definition: any potentially contaminated site prohibiting reuse (ex: Superfund sites are brownfields but managed under different program)
    - Impossible to map all potential sites bc definition is highly inclusive, depends on mindset (sea level rise vs. flooding)
    - Any site with historical industrial use can apply for brownfield resources

- Julie Ulrich, The Nature Conservancy
  - Reinvent image/definition of brownfields
    - Typical brownfields = huge sites, industrial wasteland, superfunds
    - But most brownfield sites are actually 1-2 acre parcels, littered all over neighborhoods
    - Inadequate methodology to deal with thousands of smaller scale lots
    - Brownfields development has connotation for producing more stormwater problems, but opposite is true for brownfields, which can reduce unproductive impervious surfaces, allowing stormwater infiltration, minimizing flood
    - How does residency of a lot exclude it from brownfield definition?
      - Part of EPA's brownfield definition = vacant/unutilized, even though occupied lots can have contaminants too
      - Vacant sites have potential for redevelopment, while occupied lots already have purpose
      - Definition requires opportunity to incorporate revisioning into cleanup process
  - Camden
    - Every neighborhood in Camden has small vacant lots, contribute to
      - Deteriorated water infrastructure
      - Poor quality of life
      - High vacancy
      - Many abandoned residential sites that will be demolished
    - Land use:
      - 41% brownfields
      - 32% vacant residential
      - >1 mile of brownfields along riverfront = opportunity for re-envisioning
    - Current projects use stormwater management to affect entire watershed, include cumulative community benefit, can act as model for all UWFP cities
      - Harrison Avenue landfill
      - Phoenix Park
      - Waterfront South

Lightning Round Report Out: Highlights

- **Wilmington: Greater Brandywine**
  Bobbi Briton
  - DE has small demographics
    - Con: lacks manpower of larger states
    - Pro: smaller networks means easier to build connections
  - Brandywine village: large investments weren't working so residents took action to make community aware of the problem

  - Developed Brandywine Coalition of resource partners
    - Gathering of partnerships can be replicated down to Christina river for a regional perspective
    - Dept of State transportation, DEP, etc is engaging with community
    - Superfunds and developers came to city to use riverside land for condos, but Coalition opposed, wanted to involve community perspective
  - City received grant to study piping problems, daylighting, etc, potential trail to solve stormwater problems

- **Using a Collaborative Approach for Urban Issues: Camden Collaborative Initiative**
  Frank McLaughlin, NJDEP
  Sabina Pendse, EPA Region 2, Sustainable Communities
  - CCI= model for how local partnerships get things done
    - Needed solutions for CSO flooding
    - Waterfront south rain garden park = great example of collaboration using creative funding sources
    - Riparian corridors offer opportunities for community benefits and stormwater management
  - Framework:
    - Gather resources
    - Plan sustainability goals beyond stormwater management (air quality, water quality, recycling, open space, environmental education)
    - Take stock of what's already happening, what works, etc
    - Still need to work on metrics for workgroups
    - Goal: frame simple activities (planting trees, existing projects, etc) in terms of initiatives for sustainability, etc, to get help/funding
  - Environmental justice:
    - Begins with community petitions/self-identification
    - State dept. accepts petition and moves forward
    - Then moved toward broader, holistic process, collaboratively work with communities
    - Considering interests and concerns of community members, broaden to address city-wide issues
  - Example of federal organizations coming in to assist initiatives that start locally

- **Philadelphia: Land Care Program**
  Bob Grossman, Pennsylvania Horticultural Society
  - PHS is an old organization
    - Lots of experience facilitating community garden programs, fighting effects of vacancy on neighborhood
    - Has only recently incorporated environmental focus: Philadelphia Green helps communities build gardens on vacant lands
  - How can PHS reverse degradation, create amenities, stabilize neighborhoods?
    - After working with many city agencies, by 2003 refined action plan for most efficient/economic process: clean and green treatment = remove debris from vacant lot, add topsoil, grass, trees, then maintain

    - Success: city bought in, could invest money more efficiently into maintaining vacant lots, determining highest priority sites, cut costs
    - Community land care component for less strategic sites to provide funding for small parcels, employ neighborhood residents to create jobs
    - Studies show reductions in crime and disease, and increased housing values
  - How to choose sites?
    - Dynamic process aligns views of city officials with communities, and
    - Usually focuses on most visible sites near schools, commercial development, with highest visual impact, potential for social benefit

Chester Tour: Opportunities and Challenges

- Latifah Griffin
  - Wade dump site, worst nonnuclear environmental accident: 2/2/78
  - 6th and Upland: (priority #1) The site is a gateway for tourism, could be developed into a hotel to complement Harrah's Casino
  - 4th and booth: (priority #2) Currently vacant, has potential for transit-oriented development because regional rail runs adjacent
  - Front Street to 291 and Flower to Jeffrey: (priority #3) Currently vacant, used for private stadium parking, has development potential to complement PPL Park
  - 10th and Chestnut: (priority #4) Potential due to proximity to Harrah's Casino/Widener University
  - Waterfront Park: (not a priority) heavy industrial history, currently used for parking
  - 6th and Lloyd: (not a priority) currently a scrapyard
  - 3rd and Broomall: (not a priority) currently vacant, overgrown, formerly truck line company
  - Front Street to 291 and Flower to Central: (not a priority) possible site, heavy industry
  - PPL Park and the Wharf: Superfund site